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RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY 1755

RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 0298

RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 1053

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 001605

SIPDIS

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TAGS: IZ KU PGOV PREL UN

SUBJECT: AMB. CROCKER'S MEETING WITH KUWAITI AMIR

Classified By: CDA Misenheimer for reasons 1.4 b and d

Summary

**¶1.** (C) On October 29, U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker met with Kuwaiti Amir Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al Sabah to discuss developments in Iraq since the U.S. military surge began and United States policy following the September Crocker/Petraeus testimony. Crocker underlined the need for renewed Arab diplomatic engagement to counter Iranian influence and reinforce Iraq's Arab identify. The Amir said the GOK was looking for a suitable location for its embassy in the International Zone, and the FM pointed out that Iraq had yet to appoint an envoy of its own to Kuwait. End Summary.

Meeting Participants

**¶2.** (U) On October 29, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker met with Kuwaiti Amir Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al Sabah. Also in the meeting were Crown Prince Shaykh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al Sabah, Prime Minister Shaykh Nasser Mohammed Al-Ahmed Al Sabah, and Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem Al Sabah. USG official participants included CDA and poloff (notetaker), Embassy Baghdad's Senior Advisor David Pearce and Special Assistant Ali Khedery.

Crocker: Troop Drawdown Will Be Conditions-Based

**¶3.** (C) The Amir showed great interest in Crocker's description of the events surrounding his September testimony to the U.S. Senate. Crocker explained that, while there would be a gradual drawdown of US forces in coming months, it would be conditions-based. Political leaders of both major US parties realized that the next US president would enter office in January 2009 with a substantial US troop presence in Iraq. The Ambassador observed that the decline in the general level of violence had also created some political opportunities. The Amir appreciated the assurances that a potential U.S. troop withdrawal would be handled responsibly and that Congress was leaning away from establishing artificial timetables for withdrawal.

Support for U.S. Military Effort

**¶4.** (C) The Amir welcomed continued cooperation with the USG in terms of military engagement in Iraq. He said Iraqis and Kuwaitis alike were victims of Saddam. He also linked Iraqi stability with that of future Kuwaiti stability and promised

to continue to stand with the U.S. in terms of support for the effort in Iraq.

Progress in Iraq

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¶ 15. (C) Crocker informed the Amir that the Coalition initiative of working with and empowering tribal leaders has met with some success in Anbar, with additional gains in Baghdad, Diyala, Salahadin and Ninevah. He also said that tens of thousands of young men who could potentially be vulnerable to recruitment by Al-Qaeda are now joining the Iraqi security forces to fight insurgency and terrorism. He also stated that some progress, though not as dramatic, has been made in turning local populaces in Basra against extremist elements such as Jaysh Al-Mahdi.

Arab Leadership Needed

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¶ 16. (C) Crocker pressed the importance of increased Arab leadership and involvement in the region. He also spoke of how Iraqi Shi'a Arabs are feeling isolated and insecure, indicating to the Amir that now was the time to shore up Iraq's Arab identity and counter Iranian influence. He said that there is not a single Arab ambassador located in Baghdad, but the Iranian ambassador is very busy. He urged the Amir, and the FM in a separate follow-up conversation, to consider returning the Kuwait ambassador to Baghdad. The Amir was aware of charges that Iran supplied weapons to militias in southern Iraq, and said that Iran has no right to fight a proxy war with the U.S. in Iraq. He commented that Iran's intervention in Basra and southern Iraq increases the

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sectarianism between Shi'a and Sunni and even causes rifts among various Shi'a factions.

Kuwait Embassy in Baghdad

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¶ 17. (C) The Amir did not directly address the issue of sending an Ambassador to Iraq, but did indicate that Kuwait is seeking a suitable location in the Green Zone for a new embassy. In an aside, the FM said one of the delays in deploying Kuwaiti Ambassador-designate Ali Al-Moumen to Baghdad is that Iraq has yet to send an ambassador to Kuwait.

Kuwaiti support for Iraq; UNCC

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¶ 18. (C) The Foreign Minister told Crocker that the GOK has allocated a USD 60mil grant for hospital and school development in Iraq but mentioned that this amount and previous loans have not been transferred yet. He cited security and corruption claims as the primary reason for the delay in transferring the funds, but also quipped that citizens of Kuwait are nervous about sending funds to Iraq when the USG cannot account for amounts of money far greater than these Kuwaiti pledges. Though the Amir broached the issue of debt relief for Iraq (in the terms of the UN Compensation Commission dues to Kuwait), the FM told Crocker that it is not the time to raise the issue in Kuwait; the Kuwaiti populace is not ready to consider such an endeavor. (Comment: the UAE was also resistant on debt relief, but tied it more directly to UAE unhappiness with the perceived sectarian character of the Maliki government. End Comment.)

Maliki Remark Still Rankles Kuwaitis

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¶ 19. (C) The FM also relayed to Amb. Crocker that in terms of border demarcation between Iraq and Kuwait, a remark previously made by Iraqi PM Nouri Al-Maliki still rankles with the Kuwaitis. He indicated that Al-Maliki, in reference

to differences over demarcation of the border, reportedly remarked, "What is a foot here or there between friends?"

Fuel Deliveries

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¶10. (C) With the PM, Shaykh Nasser Mohammed Al-Ahmed Al Sabah, Crocker urged that Kuwait do everything possible to facilitate fuel deliveries to Iraq. The PM noted the recent visit of the Iraqi Electricity Minister, and offered assurance that Kuwait was taking action in this regard.

Turkey

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¶11. (C) The Amir said that he was very concerned with potential escalation of conflict between Turkey and Iraq's Kurds. He added that a Turkish invasion into Iraq would provoke a reaction from Arab states that would set back the notable accomplishments recently witnessed in Iraq.

¶12. (U) Amb. Crocker has cleared this cable.

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